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A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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IV. Treasure that Cannot be Stolen
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PERFECT PEACE.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—1 PET. I. 8, 9.

This passage points to a higher form of experience than is common among Christians. If such language be applied to the earlier experiences of Christian people, it will discourage them.

When a young botanist brings in from the field a flower, and compares it with some magnificent drawing of the same flower; or when he chances to pluck an imperfect flower by the wayside, too early developed for its own good, frost-bitten, and dwarfed, and compares it with the same flower as it has been developed by the hand of skill under glass, or under the most favorable circumstances in the garden, large, glowing, and perfect, he is tempted to throw away his specimen, and say, "It is not the same thing. I have not found the flower." And yet, it is the same thing, though the stage of development is very different.

Nothing is more discouraging than for persons to attempt to measure their experiences in the Christian life by taking the ultimate and final forms which moral feelings assume after a life of inspiration and of providential development, and comparing the nascent states, the buds, the earlier blossoms, with the later stages, and making these later stages a test of the reality of the earlier ones.

It is true that there is an *unspeakable joy* in Christian hearts. There is a *perfection of glory*. There is a *heavenly gift*—a gift which, as is declared here, is the very *end of our hope*. And it is *salvation*. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." This glory, this gift and this salvation are spoken of as belonging to this present state of existence. They do belong to it?

I wish to speak, this morning, upon the higher conditions of Christian experience in this life.

We ought to dismiss from our minds, entirely, the mechanical idea of conversion and experience, as if Christians were so many gold coins

SUNDAY MORNING, Feb. 20, 1870. LESSON: GAL. III. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection) Nos. 335, 430, 1262.

stamped in the mint, exactly alike in weight, in figure, in letter, in milling, and in every other element. We must remember that Christians are infinitely various. We should understand that the Christian religion is not a name for a certain outward and theoretic system. Nor is it a name for a prescribed and definite round of experiences that may be counted and perfectly described.

The Christian faith is our name for all living experiences which are ever bred in the human soul by the power of God. It would be just as inappropriate to say that music was simply and only that which had been thought out and uttered by instruments hitherto, and not all that ever might be thought out by new geniuses under new musical inspiration, as to say that the Christian faith was merely a given number of doctrines, or a given number of usages, or a given line and circle of experiences.

That term, *Christian faith*, signifies the possibility of the human soul under the divine guidance of God and inspiration. And all that is ever to be thought aright, all that ever is to be experienced in that direction which the soul takes when it works up toward its God, belongs to Christianity. And the unuttered parts of Christianity, the undeveloped truths of Christianity, which are to come through human hearts and human life, I fain would believe are the major parts.

Hence, whatever the soul comes to, whatever it gains or legitimately develops, under the divine influence and guidance, is a part of Christianity.

Christianity is to be found in the living experiences of Christ's elect, and is not to be confounded with what has been felt. It includes all the possibilities of the mind. It is *Christ in you the hope of glory*, with all the fruits of that indwelling. And the infinite variety of such fruit of the Spirit can be imagined in no way so well as by the infinite variety of the products of the sun, varying from the lichens and dwarfed shrubbery of the Arctic circles, with the increasing warmth of every latitude, to the magnificent tropics. All these things, from the extreme north to the equator, are children of the sun.

But, though variety is infinite in Christian experience, yet it is all one. It is all the fruit of the Spirit of God working upon the quality or faculty of the human soul.

In this great variety, we may help ourselves by some classification. And for all general purposes it is enough to say that true Christian life is to develop itself, or to fall, under one of three heads or departments.

1. The earliest and the lowest stage is that of conscience. We do not generally begin our Christian life at the point of love. That comes somewhat later. We begin to think, to purpose, to strive, to pray, under the mingled influence of fear and conscience. Self-condemnation,

fear of consequences, the censure of our better moral nature—these work in the beginning, and bring us on to the first line of true Christian experience.

The first steps of Christian life in this lower department, are those of deliberate choice. The lower Christian life is a life of voluntary purpose kept up every day. It is a state in which duty is the mainspring. In all stages of religious development, duty is implied, and duty exists in some form or other, but in its first stage it has preëminence it stands out; it is the master motive; it is the one ruling thing. "What is right? What ought I to do? What is it my duty to do?" —this is the spirit of the lower or first stage of Christian experience. We forbear a thousand things because we ought not to do them. We perform many things that have no sap in them to our taste, because we ought to do them. We keep days or refuse days, we keep ordinances or refuse ordinances, from a bare sense of right or wrong, as the case may be. And we are called at every hour, and at every moment, almost, to reject some things on purpose. We struggle up to a choice, and say, "Thank God! I have a victory, and I can say No." We put the wrong behind us; but it is by a perpetual effort. We are at the oar, and every inch that we make upon the river of life is one that we pull for. We have no current yet, and very little wind of inspiration, to drive us along. It is work of the arm and of the hand. It is purpose, *purpose*, PURPOSE, all the way through.

It is in this stage that a man has a large sense of morality. Men look upon their relations one to another, and their relations to the world, and their relations to God, their occupations, and the duties growing out of them; they endeavor to accept these relations, and their consequent duties, as the law of life; and they are continually driving up their performance of duties. Thus they become earnest; they become self-exacting; they even become self-persecuting, and sometimes live in a state of perpetual self-condemnation because their sense of duty is more keen than their power of performance. Their ideal is flashing; the real drags behind, and is dull.

In this lower, this perfunctory stage of Christian experience, when we are trying to do well, when we are depending upon our will for our ability to do well, and when we march up to duties and assail them on purpose, there is very little moral intuition in our life; very little involuntariness; very little spontaneity; very little gush and unthought-of outflow.

In *terms*, God may be the Father of persons in this condition; the Saviour may be their pitying Friend, in *terms*; but these higher conceptions are occasional only. Men watch for them; and bless the hour when they really have them; but they do not find these their

constant experience. The *spirit* is, that God is a master, if not even a task-master; that he is the Judge, the Governor, the Law-maker, and the Magistrate that administers law. Men live in a state of responsibility; in a state of care and anxiety. And every day they make up their account, as it were. Every day they reckon with themselves. Every day they think whether they have a right to be at peace with God. Every day they are under condemnation. And every day they go and pray it away—they do not know how or why—till they feel better again. They can give no philosophy of the change which they experience. They are honest; they are earnest; they have set their face to live according to the commands of Christ; they have begun to find out a great many of those commands; and they are fighting against their passions, and their old habits, and the influences of the world, to enable them to do it. They have all the sovereignty of their reason and will on one side, and are hewing their way; but it is all work. Now and then there is an hour of lightness and of joy. They do not know where it came from, or why it went away; but they are very thankful for it.

The main principle is this—bracing up, and saying, "I have begun or found the Christian course. Oh! that I may be faithful to the end. Pray for me, that I may hold out. I will persevere. Get thee behind me, Satan. I am a warrior." That is the spirit in which they live, fighting for the right; fighting for duty; fighting to keep their vows and covenants; pressing upward; often overthrown; often overcome; often driven back; but maintaining this battle and struggle of life incessantly. And it is a life in which, the clearer your reason, and the more exacting your conscience, the more wretched you are. Woe be to that man who ever matches himself against his own ideal! Woe be to that man who is clear-eyed to see the invisible, and attempts to make the visible and the real a portraiture of it. It is the seventh-of-Romans experience over again in every man's life.

2. Out of this stage, sometimes by one history, and sometimes by another, people emerge into a second one, and a very much higher one —one in which they have heard Christ saying to them, "Henceforth I call you, not servants, but friends." They have been God's hired men; they have been working on his farm; they meant to work all the time; they gave him the advantage of all that they possessed; they were faithful to his property; they attempted to be good, honest workmen and servants of the Lord Jesus—with an emphasis on the word *servants;* they endeavored to do their duty fully. But there comes a time when they are called out of the field, and out of the cottage, into the mansion. And the Master of the mansion says to them, "Henceforth I call you not servants;" and takes them by the hand, saying, "I

call you friends." And they are friends thereafter. They are now conscious that their feet have been placed on a different footing; they think differently of him, and feel differently toward him. And they live differently.

It is this second stage that is the terminus of most Christian experience—even of that which is ecstatic and high; of that state I will give a few words of explanation.

It is a stage of experience which does not do away with a sense of duty, or of morality, or of conscience; but it finds a motive power higher than it has had before, by which men can perform duty and keep conscience.

In old times, when women would have bread, they sat down to their hand-mill, and worked the stone, themselves grinding; and they got by exercise the digestion which they needed for their food. And that was a great deal better than starving. But now, when men want meal, or flour, mills are arranged in just the same way, so far as the stone is concerned. There has not been any improvement in that for four thousand years. It grinds on precisely the same principle to-day that it did in the Arab tents, or on the plains of Syria. But the motive power has changed. First came wind. That was better than the hand of man. Afterwards came water. And now vapor is used. The difference is not that grinding has ceased, or that the principle of grinding has changed, but simply that the motive-power has changed, so that we now grind more, and grind better, and grind with ten thousand times less effort, than men used to.

In the beginnings of Christian life men grind their own food, by their own hands, and work for it. When they come into a higher stage, the difference is not that the food or the grinding is dispensed with. There is just the same sense of duty and moral rectitude; there is just the same sense of endeavor; but there is a higher inspiration by which the work is done; there is a new class of feelings that rise up and become the motive-power of the soul.

It is that stage in which love and hope become the true motive-power. Men rise so far toward God in conception and sympathy that they begin to be conscious that the divine nature quickens in them, more than anything else, the love and hope principle. So that they have all the trust, all the familiarity and all the power that comes from love; and they have all the buoyancy and cheerfulness and hope that comes from the future. And when hope and love predominate, they do not destroy conscience. They merely cover it down. In the beginning of Christian life conscience is like a man's skeleton. A skeleton is indispensable; but a man is not comely who has nothing but that. It is not until love and hope begin to give flesh and skin that

cover the hard skeleton, that the Christian life takes on fair proportions. The backbone is there, and ought to be; the other bones are there, and cannot be dispensed with; but they are hidden, they are covered, and men are beautiful in life.

In Christian experience, then, you will never lose out conscience, or the sense of right. It is fundamental. It is a part of the inherent frame-work of the human-soul, without which love would have nothing to hang itself on—without which there would be no place for flesh, no place for skin, and no place for color.

But as, in life, we are not accustomed to think of each other anatomically, thank God, as the sum of lungs, and stomach and liver, and what not; as we are accustomed to take each other in apparent unity, without analysis; so in Christian life we come to a state in which we do not think of conscience, or morality, or this and that thing which is right. We come under the inspiration of love and hope, which are themselves a nobler way of working out these consciences and moralities than any other.

This a more buoyant and more fruitful state of mind, and one that is more faithful, a thousand times, than the other. There probably never was a better sense of exact right and wrong than you shall find in many nurses who, going out to service, take the child, and love it a good deal, and, by night and by day, suffer for it all that must be suffered if it is to be raised to virtue and excellence. The great principle of vicarious atonement is the condition of all growth in human life. It is figured to us again in each one of every household on earth. That which Christ did for the universe, and set forth on the grandest pattern, is hinted at and reproduced and symbolized in every man, in similar ways, and everywhere. And whoever brings up a child, suffers for that child. And nurses will suffer for a child in bringing it up, on the principle of fidelity, as gloriously as that principle can be applied. But the mother stands by; and the child falls sick; and then will she trust that child to fidelity? There is no more self-denying creature than its nurse. She will lie awake with it night after night, and minister to its every want. But that will not do. There is nothing like the mother. And what is the difference between a mother and a nurse? With the exception of the difference which there is between the principle of love and the principle of conscience or fidelity, they are just alike. But O! the mother has a fountain of love which no nurse can have till she is a mother. It is that *love* which is the higher power. Out of it, unconsciously, comes fruit. Out of it come noble influences that you never can get by mere purpose, or forethought, or volition. It is the intuition of love, it is the spontaneity of love, it is the creative power of love, that make it superior to any lower forms

of life. And if Christians can gain such a view of Deity—(the poorest word in the language by which to represent God! I never knew anybody in this world that worshipped only a vague and generic conception of God in the Father. I never knew anybody to come to clasping love of God except where he was represented through the personation of Christ Jesus. That manifestation of the divine Being is just adapted to our want. It exactly fits our nature. Toward the Lord Jesus Christ, as our God, every heart can flow out. There is a possibility of a love toward Christ which shall transcend every other, and be fruitful of religious experience, and a helpfulness, that you never can get from the dominancy of conscience, or from the controlling influence of reason, or from voluntariness, in any man's Christian life) —but, when Christians can come into this state of love and hope, if they can advance to this middle stage of experience, fear in all its lower forms ceases entirely. Fear never ceases, and never ought to cease; but it rises and becomes an inspiration of higher qualities.

You can use a mallet or hammer in two ways. You can smite with it directly on the substance—the wood or the metal; or you can take it as a force and strike against the handle of some other instrument; and then it lends its force to the awl, or the chisel, or whatever tool you may be using.

So our basilar passions, the powers of our lower nature, we may use directly, in the form of temper or appetite or inclination; or they may be otherwise turned to account, and, like a hammer or mallet, be made to strike against higher faculties or emotions, so that they shall lend their force to those. Thus conscience may become intoned by the stroke of the lower feelings, hope may become strengthened by the stroke of the lower feelings, all the higher feelings may become energized by the stroke of the lower feelings, which cease to have their own direct stroke, but merely lend themselves, as a hammer or mallet, to the higher feelings. Fear, for instance, never ceases to act, though it ceases to act directly. It works on the conscience, to make it sharper. It works upon hope, and makes it more earnestly solicitous. It works upon love, and makes it more anxious, and fills it with tremulousness of solicitude lest it should not be strong enough, and disinterested enough. And thus fear dies out by giving strength to the higher feelings, and giving strength to them each of its own spirit and kind. But as to the original principle of fear in its own masterhood, it dies.

In this second stage of Christian experience of which I am speaking, duty is converted to inclination. Duties remain, and men perform them as duties; but they become pleasures. And they are more and more automatic. Habit at last converts the greater part of our life into the joy and the glory of active involuntariness. And involuntariness is

the test of all excellence. No man does anything well who does it on purpose. As long as he is obliged to do it on purpose, it is done poorly. It is not until a person can do a thing without thinking that he can do it perfectly. No man that studies the stroke which he makes is likely to make it skilfully. No painter who has to think how to combine his pigments, and then has to think how and where they are to go on, can be a true artist. No engraver who has to watch with his mind every movement of the burin, is a genius in his profession. The true workman always does the work first, and then follows and sees why he did it, and reasons upon it.

And as it is in physical things, so it is in moral. Though there is a stage in which we are obliged to think, and then do, it is the earlier one; and the next stage is that in which we do the thing spontaneously, without thinking. And in Christian life it is so. When a man has risen to that state of love and hopefulness which breeds in him all divine sympathies, and all human sympathies; when he has all diligent continuance in well-doing; when he has drilled himself so that he is gentle, and sweet-minded, and humble, and soft-voiced, and gracious, and charitable in consideration of other men's thoughts, and full of peacefulness, and full of that disposition which bears cordial to men according as they have it; when by the summer of love he is ripened into these things till he performs all kind offices without thinking—then he has risen to the state of spontaneity in Christian life. And if you meet such a man, and ask him, "Do you do your duty?" he will say, "Duties? I do not know that I have any duties." What has become of his duties? What are duties? First, manure at the bottom of the vine, spaded in—and by hard work at that. In the alembic of the roots it is caught up, and refined, and separated, and hidden, and lost; and it ascends in the sap. And we begin to see it next in the leaf. And how different it is now from what it was as it lay as a black mould at the bottom! It is transformed. But go on. Now it is the fragrant blossom. Oh! how small! but oh! how sweet! Wait a little. Now it is the purple cluster, full of rich juices. The sun has wrought it, and the dews have baptized it. It is a child of the summer, most beautiful to behold. Yet there below is the father. It started from duty, which, by the invisible influence of love, has worked itself up, until at last it has taken on the forms of clustering beauty and admirable uses.

So in life men take on things first because they ought to; at length they practice them because they like to; and finally they do them because they do not think anything about them. But, subtly, at the bottom, there is the sense and act and fact of duty.

"Let me wash my own babe," says the little impatient mother. Since it is the first and only one, it is the most admirable of all created

things! "Let me do it." And yet, methinks about four years ago, when this maiden was requested to do that very act, she snarled her pretty face because it was so disagreeable and tedious, washing a babe that was squirming, and running, and full of playful ugliness. But now that it is *her* child, she will not let anybody wash it for her. It is her blossoming hour, it is her day-star hour, in which she is permitted to perform offices that she once thought were burdensome. They are just as much duties now as they were before; only she is working from a plane so much higher, that she does not think of them as duties. But if she should lose the gladness, she would come down a peg; and if she should lose fidelity, she would come down another peg; and by and by she would strike the old sense of duty. There it is, down at the bottom; only, spontaneity has cushioned it, and put springs over it. She is working from a motive so high that she has lost sight of duty; but the duty is waiting to catch her if she falls.

And so in Christian life, duty is never obliterated. The higher feelings may work so much quicker and easier as to outrun duty; but it is a reserve force, latent, coiled up like a spring, below. And we are doing our work in life by the forces of love, of faith, and of hope, with joy in the Holy Ghost.

In this stage it is, when persons have come thoroughly into it, that all holy exercises, all Christian graces, all activities and labors, all sufferings and trials, become first joyful, then spontaneous, and finally habitual. It is in this stage that we pass into that state which we call the *state of liberty*, the *state of adoption*, of which the Scripture speaks. We are the children of God, and live at home, and are never afraid to see our Father's face, and are always glad to hear His voice. We dwell in His presence, and there is nobody that we love so much as we do Him. We are children, and live at home, and have liberty.

This is considered an eminent state of Christian attainment; and it is; for it is itself an advanced step in a long line of degrees.

3. Now the question comes, "Is there anything higher than this?" Yes. There is a stage that is higher than this; and it is just as marked, just as definite and certain, as this middle stage is certain and definite and marked above the elementary or preliminary one. As love and hope created an entirely different development of experience from that which was developed by conscience, or fear, which is characteristic of the initial and earlier state, so there is a later state, which is more difficult to describe, but which I shall try to hint and define.

It is a state in which the whole soul has been carried up to the highest degree. In this state the soul has been trained, it has been practiced, it has been habituated, in the highest forms of moral attainment, until it has, as a part of its daily experience, a transcendent per-

ception of divine being—soul, and reason and imagination; until it not only sees God by voluntary thought, but sees him everywhere involuntarily; until the world itself changes, as it were, its formation, and everything bears the impress of the divine. As the poet sees all natural objects in the light of beauty; as the artist sees all things in nature in the line of art; as the mechanic sees the forces and principles in the material world in the light of mechanical laws; as the scientist looks upon nature in relation to his science; so there is a state of mind in which everything that exists in nature and society suggests to the soul the sense of God. All things reflect him. They are symbols of him. Every voice has something of the divine voice. Every form of glory brings something of the divine to the mind. Everything that is great or little draws the soul toward, and not away from, the divine Being, till one can say, "He fills the heavens; he fills the earth; he fills the body; he fills the soul; and my life is hid in his life. My life is but a taper; His life is the sun; and what taper can be seen while the sun is abroad in the day?"

Then the invisible spirit land becomes more potential than the invisible and material one, to those that have risen into this higher state. Their thoughts are so used to conversing with things that are not present, but that lie beyond; they dwell so much in the other world; their treasure has been so long there; their imagination has become so accustomed to winging its flights over the celestial city, or within it, that the soul has formed the habit of living in the sphere of the invisible and spiritual.. *Set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God,* has become not so much a rule as an experience with them, and they live in the unseen.

With this comes a change which is more difficult to describe, but which is in its effect of transcendent value. I mean that by which man's will becomes coincident with, or swallowed up in, the will of God. I do not mean that one's will as the antithesis of compliance, or as the expression of selfishness, bows down to a sense of rectitude, to a sense of beauty, or to a sense of excellency—though that is included in it; I do not mean that one's conscious personality is ever lost; but I do mean that there is a state in which one's soul is consciously swallowed up in the soul of God. I *know* it is so. I have felt it, and I see the analogies of it on every side.

Nothing is more common than selfish love. Nothing is more common than that lower form of love in our social relations; which enriches to be sure, and shines upon the path of life, and brings many fruits that are most desirable to the touch and taste, and yet it is a lower form of love. There is no true love but that which tends to obliterate the sense of personality, so that persons' natures intersphere; so that

there is almost no conscious personality in companions of a household, their reasons being consentaneous, their moral affections moving them to mutual sympathy, their feelings twining together, so that they can say, "Our lives are separate, and yet they are one, and we are one."

There never can be this oneness of life so far as the body is concerned. If there is anything that is a unit, it must be the spirit. And there is such unity in rare instances on earth. There are natures that know even in their mortal relations what it is to be so identified with another's being, that without that other they wither and die. Their roots grow together; all their vitality is in them; they live by them while they live; and when one is taken the other cannot long remain. Such persons, left behind, are not heart-broken. They are merely like a plant that bleeds to death, being cut from its own root.

Now, that state which we rarely see among men, but which we know is possible because we see the conditions of it in life—how much more is it possible where God is the Lover; where the soul may be magnetized, fired, and filled with the Holy Ghost, with the presence of God, so that its reason, and moral sentiments, and affections, and yearnings for purity and glory and immortality, are met in the bosom of the divine fullness, and we are scarcely separable from Him in whom we live.

Out of this state there come intuitions and ecstatic bursts of experience that cannot be written. There have been beautiful strains of poetry, beautiful hymns, that are angelic in their ministration, and will be as long as the world lasts; but the unwritten thoughts, and the unwritten feelings overmatch the vocal hymns. What men have thought and felt is immeasurably beyond what they can express. There have been souls in which the calm, the peace, did *pass all understanding*, and into which God did come, and *abide* and *sup*, as Christ promised that he would. There have been souls that have been conscious that they carried their Christ with them day and night. They have lived in such a state that he dwelt in them. It may be overclouded, just as our life is by the period of sleep; but as, though we have lost our life in sleep, we wake up again, so, though this state may be overclouded by care and duty, and may for a moment intermit, it returns. And these persons abide in it, identified with God, living in the very highest realm of spiritual feeling and spiritual intuition, not far, I believe, from commerce with the spirits of just men made perfect. The distance between the soul and the other life being reduced to a mere abstraction, as it were, they live upon the borders of the heavenly land.

Here, then, are these three stages: the first, which I call *the stage of struggle;* the second, which I call *the stage of victory*, which follows struggle; and the third, which I call *the stage of peace*, which follows victory. These are the three great groups of experiences into

which I should divide the Christian life. With regard to the third, many questions will arise.

In the first place, is this last experience a gift of God, or is it something that is wrought out in us? Both. I believe that God sends into this life priests. As he sends into this world men equipped to teach by poetry, and they are born for that long before the school finds them; as he sends into this world men that are mechanics, men that are musicians, and men that are orators, and that are born to their respective spheres of labor; so I believe God sends men that are to be the illuminators of the world in things spiritual, and that they are born to it. As in the case of the prophets, by their own declarations; as in the case of Jeremiah, who declares that he was called, a prophet from his mother's womb, having the adaptation in his birth; so there are men who are called to be spiritual leaders—men adapted to this higher stage of Christian development—men born to it. And the moment they are born into Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost, they pass, as it were, understandingly, through the period of struggle. And they do not tarry in the realm of victory—on the middle ground; they rise at once into the higher stage of perfect peace, and of wondrous insight and intuition and glory.

And these are the men that ought to lead the world. These are the men that stand to give to our ideals something more definite, and to show us what we are to strive for. Out of that higher realm of experience they ought to speak truths which shall take away the coarseness of our lower forms of truth, and which shall fill up the thought of the Christian church and of Christian experience with the more heavenly conceptions which belong to them. They are born to it. And Christ serves himself by sanctifying them, enlightening them, and bringing them into their true sphere and function in this life. He glorifies himself by such persons, the greatest number of whom have come to this state, by first going through the process of volition, and then developing, from stage to stage, the different Christian conditions. A man may be born into the Christian life by the stage of struggle. He may be for years and years fighting his passions, and fighting his circumstances. But by-and-by there comes to him a glorious day of insight and deliverance. In the hour of prayer, it may be, or in the great congregation, or in some sounding affliction, or in some walk or meditation, Christ Jesus rises before him in a way that he never has seen him before, filling the heaven, filling infinite spheres, filling his soul, and by his blessed power lifting him above the struggling stage, and into the stage of victory, so that he says, "By faith I live, and by faith I will live all the rest of my days."

And so he goes on for years and years, until at last, at some blessed

touch, and in some blessed hour, he knows not when nor how, he rises into the upper state, and finds, without thought or effort, that transcendent peacefulness, that wondrous communion, that exhalation of the soul, all of whose tendencies are now upward, so that he lives in the bosom of his God.

Thus he has gone through the regular periods of evolution, and has come to that higher stage.

But may anybody come to it? Yes, anybody. In its fullest form? No. But to every man, according as God has ministered the gift to him, to every man according to his own order, to every man according to his own created capacity, this is the last, as it is a proper development of Christian life. First there is the struggle, next there is the victory, and last there is the coronation of peace. And no man should think of himself as having completed his Christian course if he is in the first; until he has passed on to the second; until he has progressed out of the second, and come triumphantly into the third. For his own soul's sake, for the church's sake, and for the honor and glory of that God who has called him, he should not stop short of this highest stage.

Is this, then, what men mean when they talk so much of perfection in this life? Is this what men mean when they talk of entire sanctification in this life? Is this what men mean when they talk of holiness in this life, or of their complete salvation from sin in this life? Yes, it is just what they mean. I do not believe a word in their philosophy, but I believe entirely in their facts. If you talk of human perfection, I do not believe in it. There is no perfection here below. If you talk of entire release from sin in this world, I do not believe in that. I do not believe that any man lives who does not sin sometimes. But if you talk of a man as raised up to that state in which to him legality is ended, in which he thinks of himself as not any more a subject of law, but as a subject of liberty and of love, I believe in that.

Why, you keep accounts where you get your groceries; you keep accounts in your lower, fretting life; but what daughter ever kept a running account of love with her mother's heart, as they sit together, and sing together, and talk together, and work together, till they learn to twine their affections round each other, and live in each other, and by each other? What possible thought of law could come into such a life? Who ever thinks of keeping accounts or measuring, in the sphere of love? Love has its own way, its own liberty.

And the moment a man rises into this higher state, in which his life is suffused by love, and God pours in streams his life down upon the soul, he does not think of law any more, or transgression any more; he no more thinks about whether he is perfect or not. This third and last stage of Christian experience in this world is one in which we are

so swallowed up in the consciousness of God's goodness, and nearness, and sweetness and love, that we do not think much about ourselves. Our life is in Christ. And we are not all the time ferretting out transgressions, or looking at this or that wrong that we have done. If we committed sins, we should be sinking down into that lower state where conscience would catch us, and then we should have condemnation enough. But so long as we are living in this state of liberty and higher development, though we are not perfect (no man is perfect; God meant man to be man in this world; and no man is perfect so long as there is anything to be added in his development); yet, so far as the law is concerned, it is dead to those who live by love. There it is, away down below, to catch them if they fall; but if they keep up where they are it will not touch them.

Birds have feet to walk with when they cannot use their wings; but a bird that is not a fool will never use its feet if it can use its wings. And the soul never uses its feet, as it were, to walk with, so long as it can fly and abide in these higher realms.

Thus, the Christian experience of all sects and denominations unitizes itself. The Romanists believe that in their church there are saints who live in this higher state. Their reasons are unsatisfactory; the peculiar language which they employ is exceptionable; but the fact is not to be questioned. The Methodists believe that there are many in their church who have reached the state of *sanctification.* The Congregational church at Oberlin, and other Congregational churches, have in them men who think that they have come to the *unsinning* state, where they are not under the condemnation of the law. The phenomenon I believe in, but the philosophy by which they explain it I do not believe in. Sometimes it is true, sometimes it is partly true, and sometimes it is not true at all. That the power of God lifts those souls that are prepared for it, into a higher realm of experience which is always sweet, serene, and beautiful, always victorious, always singing and making others sing, always tearless and joyful, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory," as our text has it—that I do believe. I do *know* that people may be lifted up into this state.

Now, Christian brethren; will you dwell at the gate; or will you dwell in the palace; or, dwelling in the palace, will you sit down in the kitchen, or go up into the banqueting hall? In your Christian life, are you in the stage of struggle? Will you abide there, or will you make haste to get from that into the stage of victory, where love is supreme? And will you abide there, or will you rise still further? When one has come to that middle stage, woe to him if he stays there! So easy is it now to rise; so short are the steps; so little is the

flight; so near is the experience, that methinks one should emerge into it at once, and abide there forever.

And if one were living in this higher state, so that his face shone (for it would shine. You cannot have anything in the heart and keep it from the face); if one carried within him, perpetually, those sweet and pure and noble feelings which belong to this higher state, so that his countenance glowed with their light, his very appearance would be a preaching of the gospel of peace to men. In a time when men are swinging from their faith and confidence I despair of books; I despair of arguments. I despair of any special work to save men from unbelief. But no man can resist the argument of holiness brought in a personified form before him, in its gentleness, in its sweetness, in its aspiration, in its love, in all its blossoms and fruits of peace and joy. Let men see that, and they do not want to disbelieve. All their hearts are set a-yearning. No real conception of Christ is reproduced before men, that they do not long to have the same thing in themselves. And out of this yearning comes aspiration; and out of aspiration comes intuition; and out of intuition comes realization; and out of realization come conversion and sanctification. So that no man preaches so much and so effectually as the man that does not speak a word, but whose whole life is one revelation of higher forms of Christian development.

Oh mother! because you are in the household, it does not follow that you are not also in the pulpit. There are these open pulpits; there are these domestic pulpits. The candle that is lit for your table in the cottage, and gives its light there first, shines out of the window, also, and throws its rays far down the road, and the weary traveler sees them, and plucks up courage, and says, "There is succor at last!" and follows the light, and finds your house, and is rescued. And while you are giving yourself to your children in sweetness, and love, and prayer and trust, a light shines down the road, to those that have lost their way, and many a soul may be brought, by your example, home to Jesus.

Do not be discouraged because you have not an ampler sphere of testimony. Live, love, trust, and wait, and ere long forever and forever triumph and rejoice!

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice before thee, our Father. We take hold of thee by faith. We have learned something of thy nature. Through years thou hast interpreted thyself to our understanding, through our affections and through our lives. Thou art past finding out, in the amplitude of thy being. Yet we are as they who wander in the summer, and, though they cannot compass the whole summer, bring, in their hands, from every field, something which is the symbol of all that they have left. The wondrous glory of the heaven and of the earth is brought to them by the simplest things. And so, though we cannot compass thee, nor by searching find thee out unto perfection, yet our love and patience and hope all bring thee near to us, and there rise before our minds the conceptions of thy grandeur in wisdom, in purity, in gentleness, in love, in long suffering kindness, so that the heavens are not able to contain thee. Thou dost fill immensity, and our spirits sink back, and we rest ourselves. As the dove cannot fly through all the air, but only, according to the strength of its wing, through a little portion of it, so neither are we strengthened to behold thy face in righteousness; to see thee as thou art; and to come into the fulness of that joy which belongs to thy servants. We wait for the revelation. We wait till the weakness of these mortal bodies has passed. We wait for the disclosure of these spirits, when all that we are shall rise up and assert itself, and come to its symmetry, now compressed, and hidden and distorted by these bodies. We yet are to stand forth in fullness, in power, in beauty and in joy, such as eye hath not seen, and such as it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. And we bless thee for all this hope. We bless thee that there is something better than treasure, something better than friendship, something better than even character in this mortal life. When thou shalt be all in all; when we shall rise into glorious identification with thee; when we shall know thee as we are known, and move co-ordinate with thee, how will all the things which are most precious, and in this our state of being most needful, seem inferior to us! As the steps by which one rises from the ground to the higher rooms, as soon as they are trod on are left behind, so thou dost teach us that the things most simple and the most needful—the moralities of life, and the virtues of life—are but so many steps by which we shall go higher, to that more blessed and all-comprehending experience which the soul may have in its perfect rest with Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, is not thy pavilion open? and can it ever be crowded? Can any more come than thou canst entertain? Is there any soul that may not know its perfect rest in Christ? If all the world, if every one of its living creatures, should come to thee, wouldst thou be surprised out of thy generosity? Is it not in thine heart to give, and to give abundantly? And were there millions more, would it not be to swell thy joy? O thou Redeemer! is not thy redemption enough for all mankind, and for all the circumstances and conditions in which they are placed? Canst thou not redeem? Canst thou not set thy people free from sin, even in this life? Canst thou not bear them up in thy hands so that they shall not dash their foot against a stone?

Grant, we beseech of thee, that there may be more earnest desires among us, to enter into that hidden life, that more blessed and higher consummation of Christian experience. Oh! let us not be forever on the storm-washed shore. Let us not be forever swept and rocked by the winds. May we at last find that land where are no storms; where is settled peace; from which we behold the battlement afar off, where are wafted snatches of that blessed song which we, too, ere long, shall sing. And we pray that we may gird up our loins, make a new crown of faith, and again press upward and forward, undiscouraged, undismayed, not daunted by suffering, nor by sorrow, nor by any evil that shall come upon us. Holding all our life subject to thy will, may we take or part with whatever is best. May we bear burdens, or find them rolling off, as pleases thee; so that in all things our will and thine shall be one and inseparable.

Grant, we pray thee, to all those who are beginning a Christian life, so far the sight and light of that higher and blessed state, that they may press on with vigor, with faith, and with assured hope. We pray that many more may be drawn into the blessedness of Christian experience. Why should they die as the beasts die? Why should they seek,

groveling, the things that perish in the using? Why should they be separated from all that is pure and noble and divine in life? Why should the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ shine upon us, and not shine upon all?

O Lord! we beseech of thee that thou wilt move upon the consciences of men. Quicken their dormant feeling. Bring to a resolution and to a purpose all wavering and scattering thought. And we pray that there may be many who shall inquire what they shall do to be saved. May their voices be heard telling what the Lord hath done for them. May souls be renewed, sins be forgiven, life be recreated in faith, and thy name be glorified in the life and example of multitudes whom thou hast rescued from the captivity of sin and Satan.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt teach thy people to be like thee. May every one of them have some word of testimony. May every one of them have something to say of what the Lord hath done for him. May every one be a preacher of righteousness in the household, or wherever he is. May there be the influence of Jesus Christ exhaling from every one.

And we pray that thou wilt not only bless our Church, and our dear brethren, and the families clustered around about, but remember all sister Churches of every name. And grant that all this great band of Churches may live together not only in peace, not harming each other, but in cordiality, in confidence and cooperative zeal and labor, studying to bear each other's burdens, in honor preferring one another, and laying aside pride and envy, and all those hateful works of Satan. And grant that at last thy garment may be without a seam, undivided. And we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all the labors of thy servants for the great community in which we dwell.

Remember, we beseech of thee, all the States in this Union, the United States Government, the President of these United States, and all that are in authority with him. Grant that thy Spirit may rest largely upon them, and that they may walk in the way of wisdom. And we pray that thou wilt purify our magistracy and our judges. May all this land see justice becoming truer, purer, nobler and more authoritative among men.

May intelligence spread. May schools and colleges and seminaries of learning be multiplied and blessed, and this whole land throw off its darkness, and superstition, and base bad passions, and rude injustices.

And grant that the Spirit of Christ may pervade the whole nation, and that all the world at last may see thy coming, and behold the truth of thy Gospel, and feel the force of thy salvation.

And to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, shall be praises, evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the word spoken. Grant that there may be more and more of us desirous of rising above the besetments of this mortal life; above our entanglements with the world, with the flesh, with appetite and with passion; above our relations one with another, and with the conduct of affairs. Give us, we beseech of thee, that power of faith by which we may come into the hour of victory, when Christ shall be all in all to us—mightier in us than interest, or than our reputation; dearer to us than ourselves; and more lovely than those most loved.

So may we live in this routine of life by Christ's aid. And out of that, Lord Jesus, open thine inner chamber, that we may go in unto thee. And where there are no words; where only calm ecstacy dwells; where is peace profound, without wave—unending peace, and joy which passes all understanding—there may we abide. And so in life, rising to these glories, may we pass from glory to glory, until we stand in Zion and before God.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

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